

# MICHAEL HEMPHILL

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February 2, 2024

Dr. Jennifer Bigelow  
Superintendent, Office of Catholic Schools  
Catholic Diocese of Richmond  
7800 Carousel Lane  
Richmond VA 23294

Dear Dr. Bigelow:

As father to three daughters who graduated Roanoke Catholic – and as its former director of marketing and the Annual Fund – I know that the school’s unique selling point is clearly articulated in its name: Catholic.

For families throughout the Roanoke Valley, many of the region’s public schools offer comparable academic, artistic and athletic experiences for children. But Roanoke Catholic’s identity as an institution that *blends learning with faith and faith with daily life* – manifested by weekly Mass, monthly Adoration, “Prayer Buddy” partnerships between Upper School and Lower School students, class-wide retreats, volunteer opportunities to serve in the community, and so much more – inspires families of all faiths, but especially Catholic ones, to make the sacrifice and investment.

Elizabeth Gurney will make an ideal leader for a school dedicated to Catholic principles. Her tenure as a Roanoke Catholic theology teacher was inspiring and engaged. She commanded the classroom with intellectual inquiry, commitment to Gospel values, discipline and, when needed, compassion. As the Middle School Youth Leader at Our Lady of Nazareth, she has a proven track record of fostering spiritual growth, building strong connections, and providing guidance to middle school students in the parish community.

I am currently on a team led by Elizabeth that is coordinating a weekend retreat for Catholic high school students throughout western Virginia. She is organized, encouraging, and perhaps most importantly, authentic in her desire to enhance each person’s faith life. I look forward to seeing her in action as an administrator and leader at Roanoke Catholic School.

Sincerely,

*Michael Hemphill*

Creator & Producer, BUZZ  
buzz4good.com